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Secondary Education Review Project

In April 1980, the Ontario Ministry of Education established the Secondary Education Review Project to conduct a year-long study of high schools in Ontario with particular reference to the credit system, standards and discipline, content and organization of the curriculum and the preparation for the world of work. The Project invited both individuals and groups to submit ideas and proposals.

The Ontario Status of Women Council's Brief to the Project focussed on the need to better prepare young women for their future role in the workforce. The Brief emphasizes that in spite of the fact that women's role in society is changing dramatically, a majority of young women leave secondary school with unrealistic expectations about their futures. Nine of ten female high school graduates will enter the labour force at some point in their adult lives and six in ten will participate in the workforce for upwards of 30 years. Most will work out of economic necessity--either because their husband's incomes are very low or because they are single, divorced, separated or widowed and have no choice. Yet research is showing that young girls still see their futures in marriage and childraising and expect to work only as a 'stop-gap' until marriage and children. They

continue to enter fields of study which lead to low-paying, low-skill, dead-end jobs.

The Ontario Status of Women Council believes that our schools must act to ensure that young girls are prepared for the realities of adult life. The Brief urges a reshaping of the curriculum to eliminate sex stereotyping and to accurately portray women's status in society. Strong initiatives must be taken to eliminate sex bias from the curriculum. Course materials must include at least a representative sample of women authors; attention must be paid to the use of language which often discounts women; e.g., Man and His World; Man, Science and Technology. Women must be accurately represented, not shown in outdated stereotyped roles.

Career education which focusses on women's position in the workforce and issues related to women's employment, and presents a wide range of career options should be a vitally important component of the curriculum. Researchers have found that most high school girls know little of women's employment situation, and it has been shown that awareness of women's position in the workforce can increase career commitment. In other words, if students were aware that most families cannot afford the housewife role so many girls believe is open to them, if they knew that over half of the married women work, and that many women successfully combine work and family roles, they might plan more carefully rather than basing career decisions on outdated ideas.

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From Where I Stand



Lynne Gordon
Chairperson
Ontario Status
of Women Council

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Ad Hoc Committee on the Constitution for their superb efforts on behalf of all Canadian women. It is largely because of their initiative that we now have a strong guarantee of equal rights for women in the Constitution.

On very short notice, the Ad Hoc Committee was able to organize a conference on the constitution in Ottawa last February which was attended by 1300 women representing every province and the North West Territories. A series of proposals emerged from the two-day conference which comprised a very strong statement of equality for women. Many of the proposals have been incorporated into the Federal government's constitutional package, going a long way toward alleviating the concerns about protection for women in the charter of rights.

All three political parties supported an amendment enshrining sexual equality for women. It reads:

"Notwithstanding anything in this charter, the rights and freedoms referred to in it are guaranteed equally to male and female persons."

This guarantee of equality should provide a vehicle for eliminating discriminatory laws such as the section of the Indian Act which requires that Indian women lose their Indian status if they marry non-Indians.

The hard work of many women throughout the constitutional debate has produced very positive results indeed. To continue the work on the constitution and other issues important to women, the Federal Advisory Council, chaired by Lucie Pepin, is hosting a meeting of the Joint Status of Women Council Presidents and Council Members on October 14 and 15 in Vancouver. Councils from Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland will be present.

It is hoped that hosting the meeting in British Columbia will draw attention to the absence of an Advisory Council on the Status of Women in British Columbia and Alberta. The meeting will give women in British Columbia an opportunity to express their concerns. Issues scheduled for discussion include proposed transfer of divorce from federal to provincial jurisdiction, childcare jurisdiction, and income security and pensions.

Lynne Gordon

S.E.R.P. — Continued

Strong initiatives in guidance and counselling, increased efforts to involve and inform parents, and more exposure to the world of work through work-study programs, are essential components in reversing the effects of sex stereotyping.

Finally, the Brief proposes that affirmative action be implemented at the school board level to encourage the hiring and promotion of female staff at all levels and in all subject areas to serve as all-important role models for girls.

In May 1981, the Secondary Education Review Project released its 'Discussion Paper' which has been widely distributed throughout Ontario to inform teachers, parents and other taxpayers about proposed directions for the future. It is meant to serve as a springboard for further discussion before the report is submitted in its final form.

The writers of the discussion paper state at the outset that in outlining the role of secondary education, they have focussed on several areas including the present and future situation of students. Within this context, the changing role of women was identified as an important consideration.

"The role of women in our society has shifted drastically. Their full participation in all aspects of our society will continue to grow over the period under study. Schools must therefore provide similar opportunities for both sexes in the course of their education, and role models to complement and provide examples for that schooling."

That being said, the special needs of young women are not mentioned again in the report which features sections on Curriculum Content and Organization, The School and the

Workplace, The School and Post-Secondary Institutions, and many other issues. Nor are concerns about sex stereotyping, role models for girls or career education and counselling reflected in the discussion paper's 82 recommendations. Council hopes that the final report will address the necessity of taking specific measures to prepare young women for the future.

Anyone wishing to comment on the opinions or proposals presented in the discussion paper may do so in writing before June 30, 1981. Copies of the discussion paper are available from the Council office or by writing to:

Secondary Education Review
Ministry of Education
Mowat Block, 17th Floor
Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario
M7A 1L2

Council urges interested women's groups or individuals to consider the proposals in the discussion paper and write to express their views on women's issues.

Constitution Report

Women and the Constitution, a publication of The Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, is now available from:

The Department of Supply and Services
Canadian Government Publishing Centre
Hull, Quebec
K1A 0S9

Price: \$2.95

CAN WE HELP?

OSWC has a master list of women's service, volunteer and professional organizations in Ontario. If you have a project that you want to get off the ground, let us know about it, and we will send you a list of women's organizations in your immediate and surrounding areas so that you can approach your local women's organizations for funding.

Northwestern Women

In March 1981, the Northwestern Ontario International Women's Decade Coordinating Council released a study of women's work in the region. Its goal was to provide useful information about the status of northwestern women in the workforce and to promote discussion about their contribution in the economy.

A major finding of the study is that the women of Northwestern Ontario are interested in training and employment in non-traditional areas: "In general, one-third of women surveyed expressed interest in employment as mechanics, electricians, carpenters, heavy equipment operators and railroad brakemen/women." This is significant in that, if training and employment opportunities were made available to women, they could fill jobs in industries with chronic labour shortages who, at present, recruit non-local transient workers.

Among its proposals to improve the status of women in the labour force, the study recommends that women be considered as target employees and training candidates in all development plans for the regional labour force. To help integrate women into the primary resource industries and into non-traditional jobs, the Committee recommends the establishment of a regional office of the Ontario Women's Bureau to work with employers, government agencies, educational institutions and women. This is currently being acted upon. A Women's Bureau office is scheduled to open this summer within the Ministry of Labour in Thunder Bay.

High Technology

Women and the Chip, a recent report published by the Institute on Public Policy, documents the impact that automation of clerical and related jobs could have on women's employment in the future. If present trends continue, up to one million Canadian women could be unemployed by 1990 as automation threatens to reduce between 30 and 40 percent of jobs such as bank teller, telephone operator and clerk typist.

At the same time, computer-based technology is upgrading and possibly expanding the more professional information work where few women are represented--analysing, interpreting, making decisions--in response to computer processed information. The skill gap between the two areas is widening and women may soon be unable to make the transition.

Heather Menzies, author of the report states: "Women cannot afford to become redundant as automation takes over clerical work. Nor can the government afford to ignore their employment adjustment needs. They need training programs and occupational mobility strategies to place them into occupations where the work is becoming more demanding and complex."

For copies of Women and the Chip write to: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, P.O. Box 9300, Station A, Toronto, Ontario, M5W 2C7, Price \$6.95.

The School of Applied Science and Technology in cooperation with the Centre for Women has launched a new program, "Women in HiTech," to encourage women to enter the field of high technology. The program has a 'refresher' component designed for women who have the entrance requirements but who need a short review, and an 'orientation' component designed to upgrade math and science skills to the entrance level required for high technology courses. For additional information, contact Linda Briskin, Director, Centre for Women, Sheridan College, Trafalgar Road, Oakville, Ontario.

Maternity — Paternity — Adoption

The Labour Standards Act in the Province of Saskatchewan now provides up to six weeks unpaid leave to all employees, male and female, from the day that a child is legally adopted and guarantees that their jobs will be protected.

Male employees are now eligible for paternity leave for up to six continuous weeks which can be taken any time during the three consecutive months before a child is expected and during the three months following the birth. The leave is unpaid and jobs are guaranteed when the employee returns to work.